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# Contra aid fight raises specter of Vietnam

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A senior Pentagon official yesterday charged that members of Congress who oppose further aid to Nicaragua's anti-Marxist resistance are leading the United States to a "second Vietnam" in Central America.

In one of the strongest statements from a Reagan administration official, Fred Ikle, undersecretary of defense for policy, said in a speech prepared for delivery last night in Seattle that congressional critics of the Reagan policy are offering no realistic alternative to supporting the resistance, known as Contras.

His remarks appear to be part of an effort by key administration officials to take the offensive instead of defending Contra aid from attacks in Congress.

President Reagan in last week's State of the Union address reserved his toughest language for his Nicaraguan policy. Vice President George Bush in a speech Saturday told a conservative lawyers' group that Congress is eroding "presidential authority" in the making of foreign policy, especially its attempt to

micro-manage foreign operations, including covert actions.

Mr. Ikle contrasted the purposefulness of Soviet policy in Central America to the on-again, off-again support for the rebels in Congress. The Soviets have outspent the United States in military assistance by a ratio of 8-to-1 since Congress cut off assistance to the Contras in October 1984, he said.

He warned that if U.S. aid is not renewed after the current \$100 million is expended in September, the Sandinistas will establish a "Leninist totalitarian regime" in "perhaps a couple of years."

Once that happens, he said, Nicaragua will become "heavily armed, closely linked to Moscow, willing to be a base for Soviet intelligence facilities and terrorist headquarters, anxious to become the arsenal for Central American insurgencies."

Noting that congressional critics of the Reagan policy have declared their opposition to the creation of "a second Cuba," Mr. Ikle said that members of Congress do not present any practical alternative to the president's program. He said those who advocate a policy of con-

tainment or a diplomatic solution are naive and unaware of the consequences of both options.

"Fencing in" Nicaragua, he said, "would run from seven [billion] to nine billion dollars for each year that it has to be maintained." It would also require "a large permanent presence of U.S. forces in Honduras, Costa Rica, and El Salvador" to interdict insurgents from Nicaragua crossing "jungle-covered borders."

Some Americans, he added, would inevitably get killed. "Reminds you of Indochina in the early 1960s, doesn't it?" he said.

The second alternative provided by congressional critics, a diplomatic deal with Nicaragua's ruling Sandinista junta, is equally unpalatable, Mr. Ikle said, because "to make this deal stick, we would allude to some unspecified threat in the event of violation, and offer economic aid as an inducement to comply."

Such tactics had already failed, he pointed out. U.S. and West European assistance since 1979 has totaled more than \$1.6 billion, while Managua's promises of democracy and non-intervention, made to the Organization of American States,

have yet to be complied with by the Sandinistas.

The OAS, he said — and by implication, the Latin American countries belonging to the so-called Contadora group — are unlikely to summon an effective effort against Sandinista aggression.

Mr. Ikle said that the critics of the present policy who have advocated the use of American force if all other policies prove ineffective have failed to understand "that our Marines would be fighting alone."

"Having witnessed our abandonment of the democratic forces within Nicaragua, why would our friends in Honduras, El Salvador, or Costa Rica now rally to support us in some action under the Organization of American States?" he asked.

These countries, he warned, would not trust the U.S. a second time, but would "seek accommodation with what they perceive as the winning side, the side that receives hundreds of millions of dollars of military supplies from the world's largest military power, the side that is loyally backed by thousands of well-armed Cubans."